

“What Now?...Living With Unbelief”

The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner, Jr.

Don't just listen to the Sermon...Ponder how you can live it!

Use these questions as a starting point to dive deeper into the sermon each week. Can be used individually, with family and friends, or with your Life-group!

1. What do you have a hard time believing?
2. Do you think unbelief the opposite to faith?
3. How is your soul?
4. How do we make gods of things? Give some examples.
5. What needs to change (metanoia/repentance) in your life?
6. How does the promise of the Holy Spirit give you hope?

Grace and peace be to you from our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I need to be honest with you, I am living with unbelief. I can't believe that comedic actress Betty White is older than sliced bread. I can't believe that there are 10 times more bacteria in your body than there are actual body cells. I can't believe that if you put your finger in your ear and scratch it it sounds like the video Pac Man. I can't believe that I am still quarantined after 9 weeks.

This is life, the life in which we are living right now, and I don't know about you, but it wears on you. It takes a lot of energy, emotional energy, psychological energy, even spiritual energy just to get through another day.

Believe me, I don't think I've questioned authority in the government, or science, or leaders, political or otherwise, even God more than I have right now. I am the kind of person that wants to solve problems, to deal with issues, to get things done.

My motto is “I got this.” Whatever “this” might be...whatever challengers I might be facing in life whether it is with my family, or dealing with mean people, or church, or society, or

sickness, death, or even Covid-19. “I got this.” You know when the going gets tough, the tough get going. Who's with me, we got this?

I prefer to deal with problems and then move on. But these times feel different. More complex, more out of my control, more unbelievable. Maybe you feel the same way.

Recently I read a blog from Bonnie McKernan who wrote a post 4 years ago, long before Covid-19, long before the shut down, but it really resonated with me given the times in which you and I live.

She wrote this...

“I feel far from God. My quiet times, when they happen, seem rote and shallow. My prayers feel weak. I am stripped of my usual security, and home, and church community, and ministry, and my support system. And what's left isn't pretty. My soul is at war.”

Wow! I have to admit that feels like me sometimes! Unbelief and faith are often at war with each other within us. I am reminded of that old prayer from Mark 9 that I always loved and prayed often, especially when I was younger. “Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.” It's a prayer both affirmation but also incredible honesty.

Remember in Paul in Romans wrote this...“I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate.”

Perhaps faith and unbelief are not opposites but facets of our life of discipleship. We believe, but we need that constant reminder that God is with us and supports us through thick and thin.

Today I want to offer you 3 affirmation from our scriptures from this morning for living in times of uncertainty and unbelief.

First, God is here, God is alive in your live. And there is no one better that I think shared that idea than our founder Martin Luther in his first explanation of the Apostles Creed. He said

this, I am going to read the whole thing because it is so rich and so good.

I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears and all my abilities; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property – along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.

You know, creation is filled with complexity and beauty and everything has a purpose and sometimes those creations are at odds with other creations, as we have seen with certain viruses and us that come to mind. But life springs from the love and life of our Creator God.

The second affirmation is this. God put you in the world for a purpose. The whole biblical narrative is about God's desire to have an intimate relationship with his creation. He wants to know you and me to be in partnership for his purposes. Saint Paul says, "In him we live and move and have our being."

But too often we have turned God into stone or gold or some other object, we make an image of him, something that we can control. Something that we can look upon, but not allow to live and penetrate into our lives. Like a piece of artwork that we can look at and admire for a time and then simply walk away from.

That is why God gives us the first command. "I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods." God wants all your attention, in good times and in bad. God wants your time, your effort, your love for you have been adopted as his children.

And like a good parent, he wants you to be your best and invites you to turn, repent, to change direction toward him in love and obedience. To be servants of the Most High God in a world of unbelief and uncertainty.

Keeping God's commandments is all about love after all! God's love in you and you living in God's love.

The third affirmation is this. God gives you what you need to live out that life of faith. The life of faith can be difficult brothers and sisters. Doubts set in despair can overwhelm us, the challenges and changes of life can knock us for a loop. The whole idea that we believe in God can seem crazy. Jesus knew you and I would have times like that, times like these.

And so, he told his disciples that he would be like a shepherd to care and lead them in faith. He told them that they would be given an Advocate, his Spirit of truth and power for mission and ministry. He told them that they would abide in him and that they would be like branches on a vine, caring and supporting each other in times of trial and temptation.

"I will not leave you orphaned," Jesus said. "I am coming to you. And because I live, you will live also."

The Spirit of Jesus is offered to each one of us, to trust in that God is always more than we can understand. To walk with us in these unbelievable times in our journey of faith, and to encourage us to believe when believing seems crazy and to give you and me hope for a new day.

God is here. God put you here for a purpose. God gives you his Spirit for your life of faith, and you can believe that! Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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